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10 ORIENTATION--information especially likely to be needed by users of a file as a frame of reference for understanding the materials classified elsewhere; organization of the file, special coding decisions, and evaluation of the file.

## GUIDE TO THE AP7 KAREN FILE

[The AP7 Karen file contains information on the Karen language speakers of southern and eastern Burma and western Thailand. Thus as well as the recognized Karen subgroups, the Pwo (Talaing), the Sgaw, and the Thai Karen, it also includes the Kayah (formerly known as the Karenni or Red Karen) who since 1951 have lived in a separate Burmese state (Kayah) from the Karen (Kawthule State). The Burmese (or Bama) Karen are concentrated from about 16° - 21° north latitude, although they extend as far south as 11°, and from 94° - 99° east longitude. The heaviest concentrations are in the Irrawaddy and Sittang deltas. The Kayah are located about 19° - 20° N and 96° 30'-98° E. In Thailand, the Karen are found along the Burma border from about 12° N, north and east to the Mekong River at about 20° 30' N (LeBar et al., 1964, pp. 58-59; Cady, 1956, p. 557).

The Karen are Burma's largest minority, constituting an estimated 10% of the country's 27 million people (1970 est., Area Handbook for Burma, 1971, p. vii). A 1961 estimate suggests that there are about 72,000 Karen in Thailand (LeBar et al., p. 59).

The Karen language is generally classed as the Karen Family, which along with Tibeto-Burman forms the Western Branch of the Sino-Tibetan Phylum, although its exact position remains dubious. Pwo and Pa-O are thought to form one subgroup, while Sgaw and the eastern hill languages form another. 23: Benedict (AL1 Southeast Asia) feels that Karen is probably an archaic offshoot of Tibeto-Burman. The numerous Karen "dialects" are not all mutually intelligible.

The Karen were originally a hill people, but during the nineteenth century, large numbers of them moved onto the plains, the Tenasserim coast, and the deltas. The great majority of Karen who live on the plains are wet rice agriculturalists using methods similar to the Burmese. The hill Karen practice swidden agriculture, growing rice, legumes, cucubits, yams, sweet potatoes, peppers, chilies, and cotton. In the valleys, they also grow tobacco, bananas, citrus and other fruits, and sugar cane. Hunting and fishing are also important. Gathering provides wild foods and objects for trade such as beeswax, honey, and ivory. Some groups practice animal husbandry and the Karen are famous as elephant trainers and mahouts. The diet consists of boiled rice with boiled vegetables and a meat curry. Rice alcohol, betel, tobacco, and opium are commonly used.

The most important political unit is the village. It is run by a hereditary (patrilineal) chief and a council of elders who also play a judiciary role. The chief performs a number of religious duties as well. Ritual brotherhoods tie neighboring villages together. In 1951, Kawthule State was established as a Karen state, but it contains only a third of the Karen population, as well as a number of other ethnic groups such Shans and Burmese.

Wealth (in cattle and bronze drums) and age are the chief determinants of status. Occupational stratification is non-existant, since everyone, including the chief, is an agriculturalist. Slavery existed in pre-British times.

Monogamy is the rule. First cousin marriages are rare, while those between second or third cousins are more common. But there apparently are not any preferred mates. Residence is usually matrilocal in a nuclear family household as part of a longhouse. Descent is probably bilateral. Matrilineal groups, headed by the eldest female, exist for ancestor worship.

The 1931 census indicated that the majority of Karen were Buddhists. As much as 25% of some of the subgroups were Christian (mainly American Baptist). The indigenous religion is no longer widely practiced. It centered on belief in spirits and impersonal power, which could be manipulated through supplication and propitiation. The village chief and senior females of matrilineal groups were the principal religious practitioners. Shaman-sorcerers and medical practitioners were also present. Various syncretistic religious movements have appeared since European contact. (Data based on information from the Area Handbook for Burma, 1971; LeBar et al., Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia, 1964, pp. 58-62; Cady, J.F., 1956, The Karen, in Subcontractor's Monograph No. 37 - Burma, pp. 823-898.)

There are two principal sources in this file, although there are at least six more which provide varying amounts of information. The 116 slips for the sources in this file will be found in the AP1 Burma file, or the file from which they originally derive. The basic sources are 10: Marshall and 19: Marshall, which are by a missionary who spent many years with the Karen. 10: Marshall focuses on Karen relations with the Burmese and the British and their acculturation and conversion. 19: Marshall is largely devoted to mythology and "extinct ceremonial." It contains a good number of material culture photographs plus a glossary of Karen words. It is probably the most comprehensive account of Karen culture (1910-1918) in the file, but it is not a complete account. 25: Ferrars is a general description of Burma around 1890 with a good collection of photographs. It contains mainly summary information on the Karen. 31: Scherman is a translation from the German, and is an account of the architecture of most of the peoples of Burma and Assam, including a section on the Karen. There are at least four sources from other files which provide some data. 23: Benedict (AL1 Southeast Asia) contians a reconstruction of Karen kinship (along with other Tibeto-

Burman groups) based on phonological and semantic analyses (Karen - Section B, chapter 2). 21: Credner (AO1 Thailand), by an ethnologist and translated from the German, contains brief summary material based on his travels during 1927-1929. 39: Bernatzik (AO1 Thailand), also translated from the German, provides some brief data as a sidelight to its main interest which is the Akha and Miao peoples of Thailand. 4: Guha (AZ2 Andamans) briefly describes a group of 400 Karen immigrants who lived in a village in the Andamans in 1924.

Five of the seven authors are ethnologists, one a missionary, and one a geographer (21). None of the categories have extensive material in them, although the kinship and religion categories do provide more than the bare essentials. The time depth is nearly fifty years from 1890 (25: Ferrars) to 1937 (39: Bernatzik /AO1/). The bulk of the file was processed between 1955 and 1956, but additions were made in 1959, 1962, and 1964.]